

## Palm OS 3.3 Debut Marred By Problems

By Rick Broida

Calling all Quicksheet users: Cutting Edge has just unveiled **Quickchart**, a companion product that lets you create line, bar, pie, scatter and stock charts right on your Palm. The software integrates seamlessly with Quicksheet 4.1, and supports automatic label detection and grayscale graphics. \$19.95 (free with purchase of or upgrade to Quicksheet 4.1), Cutting Edge Software, [www.cesinc.com](http://www.cesinc.com)

Though other options have been available for quite some time, Palm Computing has finally unveiled a USB adapter for connecting serial HotSync cradles to PCs and iMacs. The **PalmConnect USB Kit**, which is compatible with all current Palm models, consists of a short serial-to-USB cable and a driver CD. \$39.95, Palm Computing, [www.palm.com](http://www.palm.com)

**Backlighting Tip - The Final Word:** Okay, first we told you about the shortcut that would invert your Palm's backlighting. Then we followed up to say that the shortcut was incompatible with Palm OS 3.3. Well, folks, turns out we're just plain confused over here. The inverse-backlighting tip (shortcut-dot-8) does indeed work with OS 3.3. We apologize for the confusion and appreciate the numerous letters of correction.

One of the joys of Flash memory is that it allows the very guts of the Palm—the operating system—to be upgraded with a simple software installation. Case in point: Palm OS 3.3, which was released in late October and is free for the download. Among the key highlights of this update: shorter HotSync times and built-in support for infrared synchronization.

Unfortunately, in what is perhaps the most serious software setback since the introduction of the Palm platform, the update has wreaked havoc with many users' devices. Among the reported problems are Palms that will no longer HotSync, screens that no longer respond, and wiped memories.

In addition, many third-party software applications have been rendered inoperable, or at least exhibited compatibility problems. Inkverse's BeamBox, a utility that gives you greater flexibility in beaming applications and data, now causes a "Fatal Error" and forces a reset.

Such software glitches are not uncommon when an OS is updated, and developers are usually very quick to fix their programs. BeamBox author Jeremy Radlow reported that he is "aware of the incompatibility and working on a fix right now."

However, the crashed Palms and fouled-up HotSync utilities may not be so easy to correct. Mark Westlund reported the following experience on the Internet newsgroup *alt.comp.sys.palmtops.pilot*: "I updated my Flash to 3.3 the other week and no probs [sic]. But today, when I went to HotSync, it terminated with a Fatal Exception box. Soft resetting did nothing to restart the Palm. After removing the batteries and trying to HotSync again, the same Fatal Exception box comes up."

In the same forum, user Stan Bumgarner reported that the "upgrade to 3.3 deleted everything on my Palm—data, apps, everything. I followed the instructions exactly and saw nothing unusual going on." Other users posted stories of installation attempts that were continually interrupted midway through, and of installations that left Palms "dead."

Not all users have problems. Said one anonymous poster: "So, what's the big deal? I did an extra backup, followed the screen prompts, and poof! The upgrade was done." While it's likely that most users will have a similar experience, caution is warranted.

That said, the upgrade is worth having. We've found that the HotSync process has been accelerated considerably (a major plus if you work with large databases or have a lot of AvantGo channels, Quicksheet files, etc.). What's more, IR HotSync works like a charm, if a bit slowly. We synchronized a Palm Vx with a Toshiba Satellite notebook, not a cradle in sight, and experienced no problems.

If you do elect to install OS 3.3, make sure you adhere to these guidelines:

- Make a backup first, preferably using a utility like BackupBuddy or Penguin Backup—both of which archive everything loaded on your Palm, including data, apps and utilities.
- Download and print a copy of the instructions ([www.palm.com/custsupp/upgrade/handbooks/osupgrade.pdf](http://www.palm.com/custsupp/upgrade/handbooks/osupgrade.pdf)). Read them carefully, and make sure you follow them to the letter.
- Print a copy of the Upgrade Troubleshooting Guide ([www.palm.com/custsupp/helpnotes/palmapps/os33trouble.html](http://www.palm.com/custsupp/helpnotes/palmapps/os33trouble.html)) and keep it close by in case you run into trouble.

If you do experience a problem that's not explained in the troubleshooting guide, call Palm's tech-support department before you do anything else. Tinkering could make matters worse.

**Have you had an experience, good or bad, with OS 3.3? Write to [comments@tapmagazine.com](mailto:comments@tapmagazine.com) and share it with us!**



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### ImagerX

\$9, Walter Lou, [www.waterworld.com.hk](http://www.waterworld.com.hk)

Is your wallet getting a little overcrowded with pictures of your spouse, kids, pets and other meaningful people? Time for a digital solution. Walter Lou's ImagerX is an image viewer that can convert various kinds of Windows graphics files into a Palm-viewable format.

ImagerX displays images using 16 grayscales (on Palms that support it). Pictures created for ImagerX look significantly better than most others we've seen on a Palm/Pilot screen. They're smoother and more detailed.

The package consists of two components: the 14K viewer applet, and a Windows utility that converts bitmap, GIF and JPEG images to the ImagerX format. The viewer is quite simplistic; its only real feature is a zoom tool that lets you increase and decrease magnification. Once

you're zoomed in, however, you can pan around the image using your stylus.

The image-conversion program is extremely easy to use: select a source file, choose whether or not to automatically install it on your next HotSync, and click "Convert." Built-in compression can cut file sizes in half, thereby saving some precious RAM. In our tests, some files converted flawlessly, while others caused the program to crash. Hopefully subsequent releases of the package will include a more stable version of the utility.

ImagerX is compatible with all Palm models, but only the Palm IIIx and later can display 16-grayscale graphics. If you want to carry electronic photos, whether for practical or sentimental reasons, ImagerX turns your Palm/Pilot into a much more capable photo album. —Rick Broida

### New Software This Week

**iSiloWeb 1.05** • A little competition for AvantGo? iSiloWeb converts Web sites and local documents to the iSilo format for viewing on your Palm. It supports HTML-formatted text, hyperlinks and more. *DC & Co.*, [www.isilo.com](http://www.isilo.com)

**PQA Updater 1.0** • Wanna check out a new Query App on your Palm VII, but don't want to wait till you get home to install it? You can download it directly using PQA Updater, which wirelessly receives PQAs up to 32K in size. (Note: This is very cool, but it'll blow your monthly data allotment in a hurry). *PalmGear H.Q.*, <http://www.palmgear.com>

**Tying Tie Knots 1.0** • In case you suddenly can't remember how to tie your tie, here's an illustrated guide. Weirddware at its finest. *Herbert Hertramph*, [www.palmgear.com](http://www.palmgear.com)